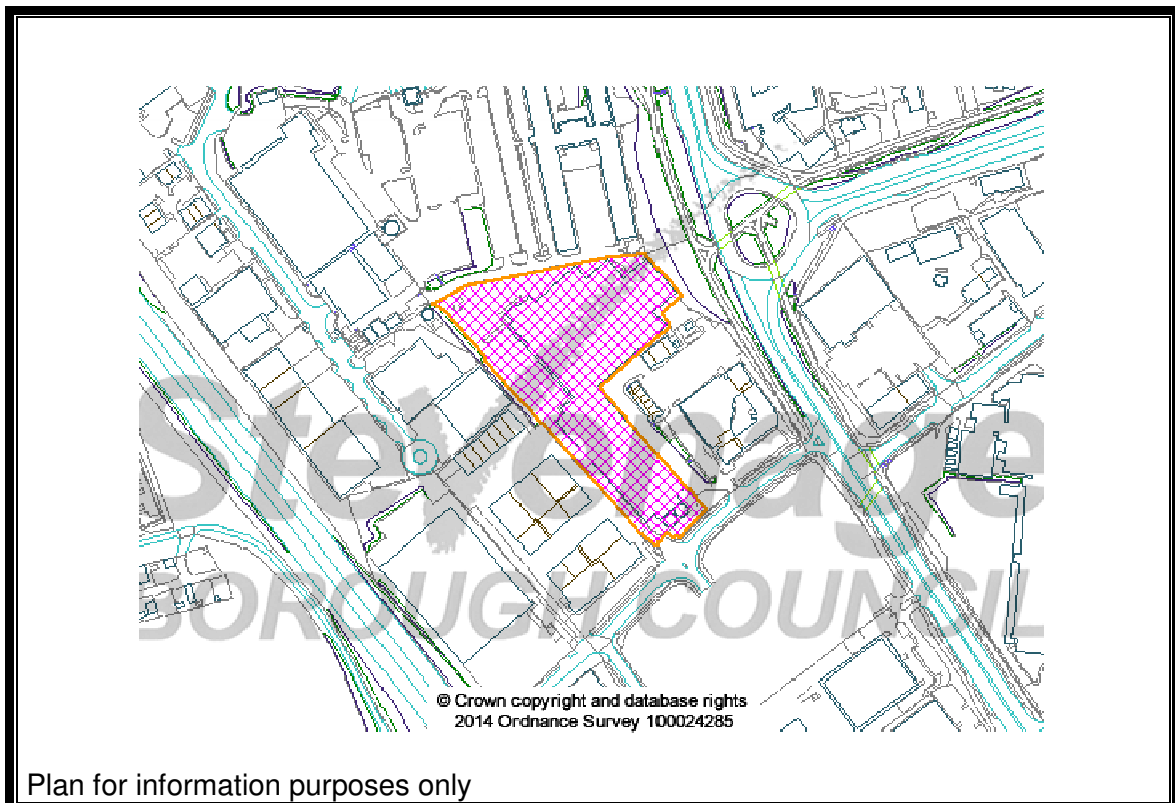


Meeting: Planning and Development Committee **Agenda Item:** 4
Date: 13 October 2015
Author: James Chettleburgh 01438 242266
Lead Officer: Zayd Al-Jawad 01438 242257
Contact Officer: James Chettleburgh 01438 242266

Application Nos:	15/00451/FPM
Location:	AVC, Bessemer Drive, Stevenage, Herts, SG1 2DT
Proposal:	Change of use of building from Use Class B1 (Business) and B8 (Storage and Distribution) to Use Classes B1 (Business), B2 (General Industrial) and B8 (Storage and Distribution).
Drawing Nos.	1506-ST-003; 1506-ST-004; 1506-ST-005; 1506-ST-06.
Applicant:	Kolak Snack Foods Ltd
Date Valid:	07 th August 2015
Recommendation:	GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION



1. SITE DESCRIPTION

- 1.1 The application site is located on the northern side of Bessemer Drive which falls within the Gunnels Wood Employment Area. The application site comprises a part two-storey, low-bay warehouse and three-storey high bay warehouse which are connected by a conveyor belt wing. The low-bay warehouse is constructed from red brick at ground floor level with sheet metal cladding at first floor level. On the western elevation of the building are 9 no. loading bays with metal roller shutters and at first floor level there is a row of metal framed windows. The building has an overall floor area of 12,282 sq.m.
- 1.2 The high bay warehouse is finished in sheet metal cladding which is dark grey and light grey with red banding. On the southern elevation of the building are two conical towers finished in red cladding. These house the fire sprinkler tanks and generators. The site has an access and egress point off Bessemer Drive which is located adjacent to the sprinkler tank housing.
- 1.3 To the east of the application site is the Business Technology Centre (BTC) which sits on the junction of Gunnels Wood Road and Bessemer Drive. To south is the former Kodak site and to the north is the Fujitsu offices which front onto Cavendish Road. To the west of the site are a number of warehouses and light industrial units.

2. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 2.1 Planning application reference 2/0295/85 sought permission for the erection of a warehouse, ancillary offices, pump house, sprinkler tank/flammable liquid store, lorry operational area, car parking facilities, pedestrian and vehicular access. This application was granted permission in October 1985.
- 2.2 Planning application reference 2/0093/88 sought permission for the erection of a two-storey reception block, toilet and plant room linked to operations building. This application was granted permission in March 1988.
- 2.3 Planning application reference 2/0023/89 sought permission for the erection of a two-storey building to form computer suite and offices with car parking facilities. This application was granted permission in March 1989.
- 2.4 Planning application reference 2/0041/98 sought permission for the construction of canopy for loading bays. This application was granted permission in March 1998.

3. THE CURRENT APPLICATION

- 3.1 The current application seeks planning permission for the change of use of the building from B1 (Business) and B8 (Storage and Distribution) to a mix of B class uses on the site which would incorporate B1, B2 (General Industrial) and B8 uses. The amounts of each use are not proposed to be limited and this type of permission is required to provide greater flexibility to meet the needs of the future occupier which would be Kolak Snack Foods.
- 3.2 To give some background to the future occupiers, they are a crisp and snack manufacturer on behalf of a number of retailers. The applicant is looking to utilise the application site as an additional production facility as part of their business.
- 3.3 The proposed development does not seek any external alterations to the elevations of the building. The proposed development does seek to provide 3 no. chimney stacks on the roof of the building. These would measure approximately 2m in height above the roof apex. These would be used to exhaust combustibles from the heat exchanger and

the fryers in order to exhaust steam/moisture. These chimney stacks would not require planning permission as they would be classed as permitted development under Schedule 2, Part 7, Class H of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015. In terms of the existing access off Bessemer Drive, this would not be altered.

- 3.4 The total amount of floorspace proposed to be changed is 12,282 sq.m. The proposed development does not seek to increase the existing level of floorspace provided on-site.

4. PUBLIC REPRESENTATIONS

- 4.1 As a major planning application, the proposal has been publicised by way of letters to adjoining premises, site notices and a press notice. At the time of drafting this report no responses have been received.

5. CONSULTATIONS

5.1 Hertfordshire County Council as Highways Authority

- 5.1.1 The proposal would not significantly increase the traffic generation or the vehicle movement to and from the development. Furthermore, the proposal would not have an undue impact on the operational arrangement of the parking area.

5.2 Environment Agency

- 5.2.1 No objection to the proposal and no conditions recommended.

5.3 Environmental Health Department

- 5.3.1 No objections received.

6. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

6.1 Background to the Development Plan

- 6.1.1 In the determination of planning applications development must be in accordance with the statutory development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. For Stevenage the statutory development plan comprises:

- Hertfordshire Waste Development Framework 2012 and Hertfordshire Waste Site Allocations Development Plan Document (adopted 2012 and 2014)
- Hertfordshire Minerals Local Plan 2002 – 2016 (adopted 2007)
- The Stevenage District Plan Second Review 2004.

The former Stevenage Draft Core Strategy and Development Management Policies were withdrawn on 1st February 2012. However, the Site Specific Policies Plan, the Old Town Area Action Plan and the Gunnels Wood Area Action Plan have all been approved locally by the Council's executive as material considerations in the determination of planning applications and continue to be used for Development Management purposes. Additionally, the Council's Interim Planning Policy Statement adopted in April 2012 is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications registered on or after the 18 April 2012.

- 6.1.2 Where a Development Plan Document has been submitted for examination but no representations have been made in respect of relevant policies, then considerable weight may be attached to those policies because of the strong possibility that they will

be adopted. The converse may apply if there have been representations which oppose the policy. However, much will depend on the nature of those representations and whether there are representations in support of particular policies.

- 6.1.3 In considering the policy implications of any development proposal the Local Planning Authority will assess each case on its individual merits, however where there may be a conflict between policies in the existing Development Plan and policies in any emerging Development Plan Document, the adopted Development Plan policies currently continue to have greater weight.

6.2 Central Government Advice

- 6.2.1 In March 2012 the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published and in doing so it replaced many documents including all Planning Policy Guidance Notes and Planning Policy Statements. The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. Annex 1 of the NPPF provides guidance on how existing local plan policies which have been prepared prior to the publication of the NPPF should be treated. Paragraph 215 of the NPPF applies which states that only due weight should be afforded to the relevant policies in the adopted local plan according to their degree of consistency with it.

- 6.2.2 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF is itself a material consideration. Given that the advice that the weight to be given to relevant policies in the local plan will depend on their degree of consistency with the NPPF, it will be necessary in the determination of this application to assess the consistency of the relevant local plan policies with the NPPF. The NPPF applies a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

- 6.2.3 In addition to the NPPF advice in the National Planning Practice Guidance (March 2014) also needs to be taken into account. It states that, where the development plan is absent, silent or the relevant policies are out of date, paragraph 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework requires the application to be determined in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development unless otherwise specified.

6.3 Adopted District Plan

TW1: Sustainable Development;
E2: Employment Areas;
E4: Acceptable Uses in Employment Areas;
T15: Car Parking Strategy.

6.4 Interim Planning Policy Statement for Stevenage (April 2012)

6.5 Supplementary Planning Documents

Parking Provision SPD (2012)
Gunnels Wood Area SPD (2006)

6.6 Gunnels Wood Area Action Plan Pre-submission Consultation January 2010

Policy GW04 Area 3: Industry and Warehousing.

7 APPRAISAL

- 7.1 The main issues for consideration in the determination of the application are its acceptability in land use policy terms, the adequacy of parking provision and highway implications.

7.2 Land use policy considerations

- 7.2.1 The application site is designated within the Gunnels Wood Employment Area where policies E2 and E4 of the Stevenage District Plan Second Review 1991-2011 adopted 2004 apply. Policy E2 seeks to protect the Gunnels Wood area for employment uses and Policy E4 sets out acceptable uses in employment areas and specifically states “in the employment areas already designated a range of employment uses within the B1, B2 and B8 use classes will be encouraged. A mix of uses within a development site will also be encouraged.” The proposal is to provide a further mix of uses at AVC and is thus fully in accordance with Policy E4 of the District Plan.
- 7.2.2 The National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (NPPF) requires that the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth and that there should be significant weight placed on the need to support economic growth through the system. The application site is currently vacant and has been since July 2014 and has been actively marketed by “Doherty Baines” who is a retail estate agent. As such, the proposal has been designed to meet the operational needs of the future owner/occupier which is “Kolak Snack Foods” who are looking to purchase the site. In view of this, the proposed change of use would help to secure the future viability of the site whereby the site would be used for the production of crisps and snacks. These are then distributed to a number of retailers which Kolak Snack Foods has a contract with.
- 7.2.3 Given the aforementioned comments, the proposal would assist in bringing the vacant building back into economic use. Furthermore, the proposal would help to generate approximately 50 new jobs. Thus, taking these key points into perspective, the proposal is fully supported by the NPPF.
- 7.2.4 Providing the mixed use at this site is also considered to accord with the Gunnels Wood Employment Area SPD and the Interim Planning Policy Statement for Stevenage (IPPS). The Gunnels Wood SPD seeks to achieve a beneficial mix of employment uses that blend harmoniously with each other and contribute to the economic wellbeing of Stevenage and the employment chapter of the IPPS states that the redevelopment and/or regeneration of existing sites within the employment areas is the most likely source of additional B-class jobs within the town in the short to medium term.
- 7.2.5 Finally, the Gunnels Wood Area Action Plan Pre-Submission Consultation January 2010 (GWAPP) identifies the site as Area 3 Industry and Warehousing. Policy GW04 states that “within Area 3, planning permission for development proposals greater than 1000m² in size (including change of use) will be granted were they are for B1b (research and development) uses, B1c (light industry) uses, B2 (general industry) uses, or B8 (warehousing) uses”. This change of use application is greater than 1000m² in size and fully accords with Policy GW04 as it provides for the full range of B use classes.
- 7.2.6 It can be seen from this assessment that the proposal fully accords with the land use policies in the adopted Local Plan and is also supported by the NPPF.

7.3 Parking Provision and highway implications

- 7.3.1 The application document states that there are 105 car parking spaces which are allocated to the development. The application does not propose to change the number of car parking spaces and seeks to use the existing floorspace. In view of this, it is considered that the proposed change of use to the mixed Use of classes B1, B2 and B8 would not have a different parking requirement to the existing use of the of the site

as an established B1 and B8 development. Therefore, it is considered that the existing parking facilities are acceptable.

- 7.3.2 In terms of highway implications, the site currently has an existing industrial vehicle access off Bessemer Drive. This road is currently restricted to 30 mph. The existing access, due to its industrial standard would have a sufficient width to accommodate two-way traffic as confirmed by Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) as Highways Authority.
- 7.3.3 In terms of highway safety, the vehicle to vehicle inter visibility from the existing egress is of as sufficient standard due to the combined verge and footway which offers a wider envelope of visibility.
- 7.3.4 With regard to vehicle manoeuvrability, the geometrical layout of the existing service yard and access road can sufficiently accommodate emergency and large vehicles which access and egress the site. In terms of traffic generation, the proposal is unlikely to generate a significant increase in vehicular traffic.
- 7.3.5 Given the aforementioned comments, it is considered that the proposed development would have sufficient off-street parking. Furthermore, the proposal would not have a detrimental impact on the safety and operation of the highway. This is supported by HCC Highways.

8 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 In conclusion, the proposed change of use to a mixed B use class is considered to be in full compliance with the NPPF, and Policy E4 of the Local Plan. Additionally, the proposal complies with the Gunnels Wood SPD, the IPPS and the Gunnels Wood Area Action Plan which identify the site as suitable for industry and warehousing. Finally, the level of parking provision is considered to be sufficient and the proposal would not prejudice the safety and operation of the highway network.

9 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 That planning application be GRANTED subject to the following conditions:
 - 1. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

1506-ST-003; 1506-ST-004; 1506-ST-005; 1506-ST-06.

Reason:- For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.
 - 2. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason:- To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

Pro-active statement

Planning permission has been granted for this proposal. The Council acted pro-actively through positive engagement with the applicant during the determination process which led to improvements to the scheme. The Council has therefore acted pro-actively in line with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraphs 186 and 187) and in

accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

10 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

1. The application file, forms, plans and supporting documents having the reference number relating to this item.
2. Stevenage District Plan Second Review 1991-2011.
3. Central Government advice contained in the National Planning Policy Framework March 2012 and National Planning Policy Guidance 2014.
4. Responses to consultations with statutory undertakers and other interested parties referred to in this report.